1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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for granted, so much so that most informants could give no explanation of it at all. It is considered to be the individual's private concern, no strong public feeling being involved. Although most people will say it is a good thing to have children, it is apparently not anti-social to abstain from doing so. A woman who desires children in vain is pitied, and those who know of remedies for her condition will offer them, but no stigma rests upon a barren woman. It is noteworthy in this connexion that sterility is not included among the causes of divorce (see p. 110). A man who wants children can take another wife, the woman is still useful to him if she works hard and looks after him well. A childless marriage seems to be regarded as unfortunate but not morally reprehensible, while intrigues are condoned unless they result in pregnancy. Religious motives for rearing a family are lacking, since the *urar* (spirits of the dead) are not worshipped by their descendants. Attention is paid to them when it is desired to obtain their help or to ward off their anger, but this is not necessarily the concern of their direct descendants. There are thus no powerful sanctions, social, moral, or religious, to counter the urge, be it grief, expediency, or any other motive, leading a woman to take steps whereby she believes herself to be rendered permanently incapable of bearing children.

MEDICINES FACILITATING CONCEPTION

When a woman who wants a child fails to become pregnant, she may have recourse to several 'medicines' thought to facilitate conception, among which are the following:

Sip (*Euphorbia hirta*).

Take a number of plants, pick off the tiny flowers (which grow in bunches close to the stalk), and push them into a hole made in a cooked taro. The woman must eat the taro, and will then be able to conceive, even if she has previously taken one of the contraceptive medicines.

Euphorbia hirta, the 'asthma herb', is used in Australia in certain pulmonary complaints (Maiden, 1889, p. 183), and there is an account in a Dutch medical work dated 1658 of its efficacy as an antidote to snake-bite, in which it is stated that 'a pinch of the dried powder, taken in some convenient menstruum, excites the heart and arouses the vital forces depressed by the poison'. Dr. Marsset of Paris, who made a study of the plant in 1885, says it seems to